USE, CARE & MAINTENANCE OF VEHICLES

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Applies to (bold indicates selection)  All Ambulance Service of NSW staff
All Operational Staff
All Administration staff
All Headquarters staff
Division staff (select Aero medical, Northern, Southern, Sydney, Western)
Operations Centres (select All, Aero medical, Northern, Southern, Sydney, Western)
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Compliance with this policy directive is mandatory.
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2.3.1 USE OF VEHICLES

2.3.1.1 Who May Drive an Ambulance Service Vehicle

An Ambulance Service vehicle is allocated to an area or to an individual in order to fulfill certain functions for the Ambulance Service. Generally, only the individual assigned the vehicle, or employees working in the area to which the vehicle has been allocated, may drive it. However, in certain situations it is acceptable for someone other than an Ambulance Service employee to drive the vehicle. These situations are:

- Vehicles which are covered under the Senior Executive Service or are part of a salary package and are available for private use, may be driven by a nominee of the employee, who must be a member of the employee’s household. The nominee must hold a current State driver’s licence eligible to drive the car, and the employee allocated responsibility for the vehicle must provide the State Fleet Manager with written notification of the nominee; or

- Vehicles driven by someone assisting Officers with the delivery of pre-hospital care, such as a police officer conveying an ambulance away from the scene of an accident; or

- Vehicles being conveyed to or from a place of repair other than by Ambulance mechanics. In this instance, “Vehicle Under Repair” magnetic signs are to be attached to the front guards.

The driver of an Ambulance Service vehicle must exercise care and courtesy whilst driving and practice safe handling of the vehicle. In the case of an operational vehicle, the Officer is responsible for both the patient and vehicle.

2.3.1.2 Private Use

Vehicles covered under the Senior Executive Service or which are part of a salary package may be available for private use in accordance with NSW Department of Health Policy.

Uniformed Managers (all superintendents) vehicles may be used for private purposes while the individual is “on call” for operational requirements. Any private use of operational vehicles whilst on call is permitted only if the use is intended to allow response to emergency on call matters. For Managers using the vehicle to travel outside of their normal operational areas, approval must be obtained from the Area Manager or State Superintendent. Use of the vehicle by the Service takes precedence over private use, as the primary purpose for providing the vehicle is for official use. Private use during annual leave is subject to the written permission of the State Superintendent, and is limited to six (6) weeks per annum. Costs incurred during the leave period, including oil and petrol, are the responsibility of the employee.
2.3.1.3 **Passengers**

The driver of an administrative Ambulance Service vehicle may carry non-
Service employees as passengers only with the consent of the State Superintendent
or a delegated Officer. For operational vehicles transporting passengers during the
normal course of duties, no consent is required. Vehicles which are available for
private use may be used to transport passengers, without consent, while the vehicle is
being used for private purposes in accordance with section 2.3.1.2.

2.3.1.4 **Driving of Ambulance Vehicles by Probationary Officers**

Probationary Officers should not drive on urgent cases (using lights and sirens)
until they satisfy the Training Officer of their competence. They are generally not
permitted to drive an Ambulance without a senior Officer present, unless in a
convoy situation, for example conveying a vehicle to workshops or following
another vehicle to hospital. In circumstances where a Probationary Officer is
traveling without a senior Officer, and encounters sick or injured patients they are
to contact the Operations Centre immediately. Appropriate assistance should be
provided, but transport should not be undertaken.

2.3.1.5 **Driving of Marked Vehicles**

It is recommended that any non-uniformed employee driving a marked vehicle hold
a current senior first aid certificate and be familiar with the use of mobile radios.
This will ensure that they are able to render first aid or summon help if they come
upon a situation where assistance is required.

2.3.1.6 **Use of Workshop Vehicles**

Workshop vehicles are used to assist in the maintenance of the Ambulance
Service fleet, by enabling mechanical maintenance staff to carry out mobile service
work. The vehicles are assigned to workshops and are to be used for official
Ambulance Service use only, and not for private use. Use of these vehicles is
subject to the requirements of this policy. For example, drivers must maintain
appropriate licences, log books must be maintained, compliance with the Motor
Traffic Act and Regulations is required, and vehicles are to be kept clean and
maintained in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. A full inventory of
all equipment carried on vehicles is to be maintained, including any stores.
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Workshop vehicles are to be garaged at the assigned workshop or Ambulance Station after hours, and generally may not be taken home for “on call” purposes. A workshop vehicle may be taken home on an occasional basis if there is a demonstrated work-related need, with the approval of a Supervisor. Approval for ongoing garaging of a workshop vehicle at an employee’s home (more than 2 nights per month) is subject to the written approval of the State Superintendent (see Section 2.2.2.7 on Vehicle Storage).

2.3.1.7 Use of Vehicles by Maintenance Personnel

Vehicles assigned to maintenance personnel, such as carpenters, plumbers, etc are used to assist in the maintenance of Ambulance Stations and other buildings, by enabling maintenance staff to travel between work sites. The vehicles are assigned to maintenance personnel and are to be used for official Ambulance Service use only, and not for private use. Use of these vehicles is subject to the requirements of this policy. For example, drivers must maintain appropriate licences, log books must be maintained, compliance with the Motor Traffic Act and Regulations is required, and vehicles are to be kept clean and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. A full inventory of all equipment carried on vehicles is to be maintained, including any stores.

Maintenance vehicles are to be garaged at the assigned location or Ambulance Station after hours, and generally may not be taken home. A vehicle may be taken home on an occasional basis if there is a demonstrated work-related need, with the approval of a supervisor. Approval for ongoing garaging of the vehicle at an employee’s home (more than 2 nights per month) is subject to the written approval of the State Superintendent (see Section 2.3.2.7 on Vehicle Storage).

2.3.1.8 Trip Recording

All administrative and operational support vehicles must carry a Vehicle Running Sheet (Form 68), to record usage. All drivers of the vehicle must record details of all occasions when the vehicle is used for both official and private use. It is important that the details recorded on the sheets are accurate, as they will be referred to as an official record, should any issues or problems occur regarding the use of the vehicle at a particular time (eg violations of the Motor Traffic Act and Regulations).

2.3.1.9 Compliance with Motor Traffic Regulations

Drivers of all Ambulance Service vehicles must comply with the Motor Traffic Act and Regulations. For emergency situations, Clause 132 of the Motor Traffic Regulations provides that an Officer in charge of an Ambulance proceeding to the scene of an accident or other emergency or to a hospital with an injured person, is not subject to the Regulations, provided that the driver or Officer gives or causes to be given the best practicable warning so as to enable drivers of other vehicles to
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make way for the Ambulance vehicle\(^1\). In such situations, Ambulance Officers are advised to use the siren and/or flashing lights as a means of giving warning (see section 2.3.1.10 regarding use of sirens and lights). Under no circumstances may the vehicle be driven at a speed or in a manner which is dangerous to the public. In addition Clause 32 does not relieve the driver of an Ambulance vehicle from the consequences of negligent driving.

Urgency of duty does not justify driving at a speed excessive to the circumstances, nor does it entitle the driver to ignore road signs\(^2\).

Whilst proceeding on urgent business, when approaching traffic lights or turning at an intersection, Officers are to slow down and bring the vehicle to a standstill before proceeding through the intersection or making the turn. This will allow other vehicles more time to see and hear the Ambulance and it will allow the Ambulance Officer driving to observe the actions of the other vehicles around, before proceeding.

When reversing a vehicle, if there are two (2) Officers on board, one (1) Officer should get out of the vehicle and assist with the reversing maneuver, advising the driver and assessing the area. If this is not possible, due to maintaining patient care, extreme care should always be exercised in reversing.

2.3.1.10 Use of Sirens and Flashing Lights

When proceeding on urgent duty to the scene of an accident or other emergency or to a hospital with an injured patient, a siren and/or flashing lights should be used as a means of giving warning to other drivers of the approach of the Ambulance Service vehicle. In cases where the Ambulance has a patient on board whose condition indicates that a siren not be used, using the siren at intersections only may be warranted.

At the sounding of the siren, clause 80 of the Motor Traffic Regulations imposes a duty on drivers of motor vehicles on public streets to give way and make every reasonable effort to give clear and uninterrupted passage to an Ambulance vehicle proceeding on urgent duty. Urgent duty includes proceeding to the scene of an accident or to a hospital with an injured person or proceeding to any place to convey a person who is seriously ill\(^3\).

Flashing warning lights are another means available to Ambulance vehicles proceeding on urgent duty to give warning to other drivers. Sections 42(a) and 149(a) of Schedule F of the Motor Traffic Regulations provide for the fitting of a lamp mounted on top of an Ambulance, capable of displaying a red flashing or

\(^1\) Motor Traffic Regulations 1935 (updated as at 21 November 1997), Clause 132 ‘Saving - fire engines, ambulance wagons, etc.:’


\(^3\) Motor Traffic Regulations 1935 (updated as at 21 November 1997) Clause 80 ‘Drivers to give way to emergency vehicles’
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rotating light. According to Section 95 (6)(d)(i)(b) of the Regulations, the lamp may be lighted at any time whilst the vehicle is being used for urgent purposes arising from an accident, fire or other emergency. As such, the lights may not be used whilst the Ambulance is proceeding on routine transports.

Notwithstanding the above, anyone driving an Ambulance Service vehicle must be aware that the use of sirens and/or flashing lights is a privilege afforded emergency vehicles, and, as such, these devices must only be used for the specific purpose intended, as a warning when proceeding to an emergency. The Service maintains a good neighbour policy to ensure that these warning devices are used appropriately and only when warranted. As many ambulance stations are located in residential areas, it is important that anyone driving an Ambulance Service vehicle respect the rights of residents living in the vicinity, and only use the sirens and/or flashing lights as a warning in an emergency situation. These devices must not be used when no emergency exists.

2.3.1.11 Drivers Licences

All employees required to drive an Ambulance Service vehicle must hold a current Australian drivers licence. As of 10 May 1997 all new Ambulance Officers must hold a NSW MR drivers licence. This is not a retrospective requirement for current Officers, but all current Ambulance Officers must carry a NSW licence of C or above.

For special vehicle types, such as rescue vehicles, the driver must ensure that they carry the appropriate level of licence (see Table 2 for details). Provisional licence holders must ensure the “P” plate is displayed on the vehicle they are driving, in accordance with the Motor Traffic Act and Regulations.

In compliance with the Motor Traffic Act and Regulations, all drivers should carry their licence while driving. Ambulance Officers are to ensure their licence has been renewed on or prior to the date for renewal, before submitting a claim for refund using Form 29.

There are numerous conditions whereby drivers’ licences may be cancelled by the appropriate authorities, most of which we are aware of.

One condition, however, that appears to have escaped attention is that of late payment of traffic infringements, which carries a penalty of immediate cancellation.

All staff should be aware of this condition and the legal requirement of carrying their licence as per the Motor Traffic Act.

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4 Motor Traffic Regulations 1935 (updated as at 21 November 1997), Clause 95 ‘Lights - generally’.
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Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicle Description</th>
<th>Licence Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any motor vehicle up to 4.5t GVM which carries up to 12 adults including the driver. Any implement or tractor.</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Rigid (LR) - Any motor vehicle with a GVM of more than 4.5t but not more than 8t. Any towed trailer must not weigh more than 9t GVM. Also includes vehicles with a GVM up to 4.5t which carry more than 12 adult including the driver.</td>
<td>LR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Rigid (MR) - Any motor vehicle with 2 axles and a GVM of more than 8t. Any towed trailer must not weigh more than 9t GVM.</td>
<td>MR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Rigid (HR) - Any rigid vehicle with a GVM of more than 8t. Any towed trailer must not weigh more than 9t GVM. Also includes articulated buses.</td>
<td>HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Combination (HC) - Any semi-trailer or rigid vehicle towing a trailer with a GVM of more than 9t.</td>
<td>HC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Combination (MC) - Any B-double or Road Train.</td>
<td>MC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcycle</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3.1.12 Use of Seatbelts and Stretcher Harnesses

For safety reasons, and to ensure compliance with the Motor Traffic Act and Regulations, seat belts should be worn by all staff and passengers in the vehicle, unless active patient treatment is taking place. Unless contradicted by a patient’s condition, Officers should ensure that seated patients use a seatbelt, and that stretcher patients are restrained by stretcher harnesses, where supplied. Children and babies should be appropriately restrained, using a baby capsule, thermocot or a child seat, restrained using the seat belt or stretcher harness.

2.3.1.13 Smoking in Vehicles

In accordance with NSW Department of Health policy, the workplace, including vehicles, should be free of tobacco smoke. As such, smoking in Ambulance Service vehicles is prohibited.

2.3.2 CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF VEHICLES

As Ambulance Service vehicles play a critical role in the delivery of patient care, it is essential that they be maintained in good working order. In addition, Ambulance Service vehicles reflect the image of the organisation, and are often the first contact that many members of the public have with the Service, so it is important that they be kept clean and tidy. Sections 2.3.2.1 to 2.3.2.8 below, outline specific issues relating to the care and maintenance of Ambulance Service vehicles.

2.3.2.1 Servicing of Vehicles

The State Fleet Manager is responsible for the Service’s Vehicle Workshops and
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fleet management issues. Area Managers and their office support staff will need to maintain a close working relationship with Workshop Leading Hands regarding scheduling of repairs and availability of Ambulances. Daily liaison may be required regarding the availability of Ambulance undergoing service or repair.

Where there is a disagreement between the Area Manager and a Workshop Leading Hand, the issue should be referred to the State Fleet Manager for resolution.

Servicing of the vehicle, including both routine maintenance and ad hoc repair work, is to be arranged by the employee allocated responsibility for the vehicle or by a Supervisor, through the workshop. Workshop staff and Officer-in-Charge should monitor the speedometer of the vehicle to ensure that routine servicing is carried out. For operational vehicles, the Operations Centre must be notified once servicing arrangements have been made, to allow the Centre to effectively handle vehicle movements.

To ensure the vehicle is appropriately serviced and maintained, a maintenance record must be kept for every vehicle. Vehicle Defect/Service Books\(^5\) (Form 65) are issued to all vehicles and are to be kept in the glovebox. All repairs and/or services must be recorded in the book.

For operational Ambulance vehicles, any repairs to Station vehicles which have been undertaken by station personnel or at a local service garage should be recorded on the Station Vehicle Maintenance Report Form (Form 61). In addition, when an operational Ambulance breaks down, the Vehicle Breakdown Notification Form (Form 81) should be filled out.

If a vehicle needs to be towed for servicing, appropriate arrangements are to be made by the most economical means. If the tow is required after hours, an approved tow operator may be used. For operational vehicles, arrangements should be made through the Operations Centre, with the approval of a supervisor.

2.3.2.2 Emergency Repairs

There are many situations where an Ambulance Service vehicle may require emergency repairs. If an emergency repair is required while a Service vehicle is transporting a patient, or is proceeding to the scene of an incident, the primary concern is to continue safe transport of the patient, or to ensure a suitable alternative vehicle is dispatched to the incident. In these cases, the Operations Centre must be notified immediately to arrange for another suitable Ambulance vehicle to continue transport of the patient, or to proceed to the incident. Once these arrangements have been made, the Operations Centre will contact the workshop or Sector manager who will arrange for repair of the vehicle. A mechanic may be dispatched to repair the vehicle on site or arrangements will be made to tow the vehicle to the nearest workshop. If an emergency repair is

\(^5\) For a complete list of all Ambulance Service fleet forms, a copy of each, and instructions on the purpose and use of each form, please refer to the Ambulance Service of NSW Forms Register.
required after hours the same process is followed. Depending on the circumstances, such as the nature of the mechanical difficulties, location of the vehicle, time of the day, and number of vehicles still available for duty (in the case of an operational vehicle), the vehicle may be locked and left at the location until an on duty mechanic is available. Alternatively, a mechanic may be called out to the scene, if required.

If an operational Ambulance breaks down, the Vehicle Breakdown Notification Form (Form 81) should be filled out by the Operations Centre.

2.3.2.3 Costs of Running the Vehicle

All costs associated with running an Ambulance Service vehicle, including both regular ongoing maintenance and repairs, are paid for by the Service, with three (3) exceptions. Individuals assigned a vehicle which is regularly available for private use, such as executive vehicles and managers' vehicles, must contribute to the costs of running the vehicle, at a rate prescribed by the NSW Department of Health. In addition, if these vehicles are used for private purposes during annual leave, regular maintenance costs during the leave period (see section 2.3.1.2 for details) are to be paid for by the employee. Individuals using the vehicles are responsible for the payment of any insurance excess if damage occurs whilst the vehicle is being used for private purposes.

Generally, arrangements for regular maintenance of the vehicle are arranged through a workshop, and would not result in any out of pocket expenses for the employee. Under certain circumstances where vehicle costs are incurred and paid for in cash by the employee these costs may be claimed on the normal petty cash voucher. For fuel purchased at a service station, the docket must be clearly marked with both the vehicle fleet and radio number. Fuel dockets for Area and Sector vehicles are to be forwarded to the creditor department at the end of each month. Fuel dockets for State Headquarters should be retained and pinned to the fuel invoice sheet when it is received.

2.3.2.4 Modification and Accessories

Vehicles used by the Service are selected and/or built for specific purposes, including taking into account occupational health and safety considerations. Generally, an Ambulance Service vehicle may not be modified from the original design and specifications. Vehicles available for private use (see section 2.3.1.2) may be fitted with optional equipment, such as child restraints, subject to the written permission of the State Superintendent. For these vehicles, the cost of any additional fittings is at the employees own personal expense, and the fitting must comply with the vehicle manufacturer's recommendations.

For other Ambulance Service vehicles, approved accessories may be fitted, subject to approval by the State Superintendent, if required for safety reasons, or for the reasonable comfort of the occupants and based on the conditions under
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which the vehicle is used. Examples of approved accessories include tow bar, headlight protectors, bonnet protector, mud flaps, driving lights, fog lights, cruise control, window tinting, bull bar, electric windows, air conditioning. If a vehicle is available with optional anti-lock braking system or airbags, these options should be fitted. All station wagons must be fitted, without exception, with a steel cargo safety barrier, that complies with AS4034:1992.

2.3.2.5 Security of Vehicles

To minimise the risk of theft or damage, to vehicles and the equipment stored on them, employees must take appropriate measures to ensure the security of vehicles. Valuable items, such as mobile phones, brief cases, etc. should not be left in plain view when the vehicle is unattended. These items should be removed, or hidden from view, either covered or placed in the boot. Vehicles taken home are to be parked off street in a secure area, such as a garage or driveway. When vehicles are unattended they should be made secure by locking all doors, removing the keys and making sure the windows are up. Officers should always be security conscious if a vehicle cannot be secured at casualty scenes, such as motor vehicle accidents. The keys for Station vehicles should be kept on the Station keyboard when not in use.

2.3.2.6 Required Daily, Weekly and Monthly Checks of Vehicles

It is vital that operational vehicles are maintained in good working order, to ensure they are able to fulfill the role of front line patient care and transport. To this end, a series of routine checks must be performed, as follows:

Daily (applies to operational vehicles only): The vehicle must be checked as per the Vehicle Daily Check Sheet (Form 64); the vehicle must be cleaned, inside and out, at the completion of a shift (at least on a daily basis); and the stretchers on the vehicle must be checked.

Weekly (applies to operational vehicles only): A Weekly Vehicle Routine Service Status Report (Form 67) must be completed once a week. In addition, the tyre and suspension air bag pressures must be checked, with tyre pressures adhered to as outlined in Table 3; and air conditioners must be run for five (5) minutes each week.
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**Table 3**

**Tyre and Suspension Air Bag Pressure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicle*</th>
<th>Tyres</th>
<th>Suspension Air Bag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Front</td>
<td>Rear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford F100</td>
<td>40psi</td>
<td>45psi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford F250</td>
<td>45psi</td>
<td>50psi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyota Tarago</td>
<td>36psi</td>
<td>36psi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyota 4WD</td>
<td>45psi</td>
<td>45psi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holden Commodore</td>
<td>36psi</td>
<td>38psi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkswagen</td>
<td>40psi</td>
<td>40psi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercedes</td>
<td>45psi</td>
<td>50psi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMC</td>
<td>45psi</td>
<td>50psi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For other vehicles, please refer to the manufacturer’s suggested specifications

**Monthly** (applies to operational and administrative vehicles): The vehicle must be polished and detailed. In addition, all operational vehicles attached to a Station are to have a full vehicle check on a monthly basis as per the Minimum Equipment Checklist (Forms 69 to 78, inclusive) applicable for the type of vehicle.

**2.3.2.7 Vehicle Storage**

Pool vehicles, which are allocated to a Station or department, must be parked at the Ambulance Station or office at night and on weekends, unless specifically approved for parking elsewhere.

Approval for garaging a pool vehicle at an employee’s home on an occasional basis may be granted by the Area Manager, while ongoing garaging of a vehicle at an employee’s home (more than 2 nights per month) is subject to the written approval of the State Superintendent with the exception of operational Officers who are on call. To request ongoing approval, the Area Manager should write a memorandum to the State Fleet Manager detailing the duties of the employee which require them to garage the vehicle at home, and then request approval from the State Superintendent. Ongoing approvals may be granted if this would result in reduced vehicle usage or more effective use of the employee’s time while on duty. For instance, if an employee is performing their duties in the field with the use of motor vehicles and wish to proceed to their home after completion of their work, rather than returning to the office, or will proceed to duty directly from their...
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homes on the following day, at a location away from their normal office. For vehicles available for private use, including those covered under the Senior Executive Service and those which are part of a salary package, the person responsible should arrange proper protection for the vehicle, in a garage or other secure place.

For information on storage of workshop vehicles and vehicles used by maintenance personnel see sections 2.3.1.6 and 2.3.1.7.

2.3.2.8 Temporary or Relief

Under certain circumstances, a temporary vehicle may be assigned to a Station for operational use. The Station allocated the vehicle is responsible for maintaining the vehicle.

Upon receipt of the vehicle, a Standard Equipment Checklist (Forms 69 to 78), appropriate for the type of vehicle, must be completed. If any equipment is missing, it should be obtained from the Station’s stores, if available, or requested from central stores. A copy of the requisition should be attached to the Standard Equipment Checklist so that subsequent stations can follow up on outstanding items, if necessary. Equipment must not be removed from the vehicle, as relief vehicles must always be maintained as per the vehicle checklist.